

Prep. of teachers

Circular Letter No. 287.

February 28, 1906.

To Superintendents.

Gentlemen:--

Teachers' Institutes will be held this year on a slightly different plan from that followed in former years. As planned this year, each institute will be held for one day only and will consist of two day-sessions and an evening meeting. Attendance will not be absolutely obligatory on all teachers but you are authorized to excuse only those whose attendance would require an undue expenditure of time or money, and any teacher excused will be expected to conduct his classes as usual.

With few exceptions, the Institute in each district will be in charge of a superintendent from another district as shown on the accompanying schedule. As the Department has no special fund at its disposal this year from which to pay the expenses of the institutes, Superintendents assigned to lead institutes in other districts will be expected to pay their travelling expenses from the regular monthly travelling allowance. Messrs. José Janer and Francisco Zuazaga of the Insular Normal School, both of whom are widely and favorably known for their knowledge of local conditions and interest in educational progress will the

Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner respectively and speak in the evening meetings. Besides the addresses by the Commissioner and Mr. Janer or the Assistant Commissioner and Mr. Zuazaga, each superintendent should make special efforts to secure a good local speaker, preferably not directly connected with the school work. In all cases, men of distinct standing and influence should be secured if at all possible. These three addresses together with an introductory speech by the President of the School Board or Alcalde will be sufficient for the evening. You are urged to arrange carefully the details of the evening meeting and to attempt to secure a full and representative attendance of the public.

It is believed that it will be best to arrange for the discussion of four subjects in the two day-sessions. The Medical Association of Porto Rico has requested that a place be given on the program in each institute to a member of their body who will speak on Anemia and its treatment and they have kindly offered to furnish the speaker in each town. If an official program is printed, this number should be given as "Uncinariasis; su profilaxia y tratamiento."

For the three subjects dealing with school work it is thought that the best results will be secured by following a plan somewhat similar to that followed in the

recent Superintendents' Conference. Subjects should be assigned to three teachers who should be directed to prepare their articles and submit them in writing to the superintendent at least one week before the date of the institute. Then for each paper two other teachers should be designated to prepare short supplementary discussions. The principal speaker on each subject should be allowed twenty or thirty minutes and each of the supplementary speakers not more than ten minutes.

In the hope of aiding you and your teachers in this matter, outlines have been prepared on four topics any three of which may be selected for discussion if you so desire or other topics may be substituted by you if you prefer. Suggestive outlines on the four topics accompany this letter. A table showing the dates, speakers and leaders for the institute is also enclosed. The institute director should be informed as to the definite program as soon as possible so as to enable him to make any preparation he may seem advisable.

Very respectfully,

Commissioner of Education.

LPA&MWK 1836

Enclosures 5

Starting Work in a Grade in English.

I Preparation.

1. Little or none required for the children.
2. Teacher cannot have too much.

II The First Steps.

1. Teacher should procure a sheet giving in English all the common class-room orders and directions and practice for one week giving all class-room orders in English.
2. English work should be begun in one subject, either in Reading or Arithmetic. Reading is easier for teacher because text is furnished and Reading, Writing, Spelling, Composition, Dictation and Memory Work are all correlated.
3. In taking up Arithmetic the entire subject must be reviewed no matter in what grade work is begun. Counting must first be thoroughly taught and then the fundamental operations with small numbers.

III Essentials to Success.

1. The teacher must prepare her work with the greatest care. The lessons must be short, the preparation must be written and the teacher must know not only what she is going to teach and how she intends to teach it but just how she will form her questions and statements.

2. The teacher must speak very slowly and very distinctly, remembering that the secret of distinct English pronunciation depends on the last syllable or letter of each word.
3. English must be used and required exclusively.
4. Questions not at first understood by children must be repeated in the same form until understood and answered.
5. Complete answers in correct sentences must be required and answering by saying "Yes" or "No" persistently discouraged.

The responsibility of the teacher for maintaining high enrollment, high average attendance and a low record of absences and practical means of attaining these ends.

I Responsibility of teacher.

1. Experience proves that some teachers always have high enrollments while others never do or if they begin with many pupils soon lose them. This proves the personal responsibility of the teacher.
2. In Porto Rico where many more children are out of school than are enrolled a good teacher in a rural school or a low grade ought always to be able to fill vacancies.
3. Experience also shows that the teacher is largely responsible for tardiness.

II Means and Methods.

1. Securing co-operation of parents.
2. Insisting on excuses from parents or guardians.
3. Insisting that all lost work be made up out of school hours.
4. Persistent teaching of child's moral responsibility in justice to the other children.
5. Rewards and Punishments.

6. Warning parents.

7. Rigid application of School Law, through securing co-operation of Alcalde, School Board and Superintendent.

III The legal basis for compelling regularity and attendance.

1. Act amending Sec. 60 printed in blue insert in Compiled School Law.

The Value and Dangers of School Celebrations.

I Their purpose in general.

1. To commemorate historical events.
 - a. Washington's Birthday
 - b. Lincoln's Birthday
 - c. Emancipation Day.
2. To create a public opinion favorable to needed reform.
 - a. Arbor Day.
3. To direct civic sentiment toward moral and patriotic ends.
 - a. Thanksgiving Day.
 - b. Memorial Day
 - c. Flag Day.

II Their Value.

1. Serve to mold public patriotic sentiment of rising generation.
2. Teach History directly and indirectly.
3. Arouse favorable public interest in schools.
4. Break monotony of routine school work.
5. Teach pupils to speak in public.

III Their Danger.

1. May be given so great importance as to become one of the principal ends of school work rather than incidental to it.

2. So much time may be given to their preparation as to seriously hinder regular school work.
3. Arouse jealousies among children and parents.
4. Cause bitterness on part of children too poor to dress as is thought necessary for public celebrations.

IV Days which should not be extensively celebrated and days which may be.

1. Holidays having no especial significance for Porto Rico such as Thanksgiving Day and Memorial Day should not be extensively celebrated.
2. Among all the holidays, Arbor Day and Washington's Birthday seem most fitted for school celebrations.

Points on teaching medial Writing

1. Points common to all teaching of penmanship.

1. Preparation: ink - pens - holders - blotters - study of lesson by teacher.
 2. Position--of pupil at desk: of book on desk: of hand and pen.
 3. Preparatory practice; tracing with dry pen movement exercises on back of paper: practicing copy.
 4. The lesson--short: uniform for all pupils.
 5. Written work. All writing by teachers or pupils on paper or blackboard should be neat, orderly and of standard style.
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II The Medial Writing Books.

1. Form of letter -- slant -- size -- simplicity of outline.
2. Spacing -- parts of letters -- between letters-- between words.
3. Correlation. Note the value of the copies in connection with lessons in language, geography, nature study, etc.